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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2018

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SUBJECT: GERMANY: VISIT OF KUNAR AND WARDAK GOVERNORS HELPS
ADVANCE OUR AFGHANISTAN AGENDA

Classified By: POLITICAL M...

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SUBJECT: GERMANY: VISIT OF KUNAR AND WARDAK GOVERNORS HELPS
ADVANCE OUR AFGHANISTAN AGENDA

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE.

REASONS:

1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY. During a December 18 visit to Berlin, the governors of Kunar and Wardak provinces pressed for greater German assistance with the training and equipping of the Afghan Border Police (ABP) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). In a surprise announcement, the Interior Ministry revealed that Germany planned to establish a new training academy for the ABP in Kabul that will train up to 500 border police officers at a time. While acknowledging ongoing security challenges, both governors strongly disputed claims that a majority of the country is controlled by the Taliban. They argued that security trends are actually positive, and welcomed additional international troops to help prepare the ground for further advancements on development and governance. The governors also emphasized the need for the international community to focus its efforts at the district level and to eliminate discrepancies in development aid among provinces. The governors invited journalists during a press conference to come to Kunar and Wardak to see for themselves that the comprehensive approach is working. If Embassy Kabul

were willing, and funding for a visit by a group of ten to twelve German journalists could be arranged, we would advocate taking them up on the offer. END SUMMARY.

THE PROGRAM

12. (SBU) Kunar Governor Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi and Wardak Governor Halim Fedai visited Berlin December 18, courtesy of a PA program jointly sponsored by Embassy Kabul and USNATO, which took them first to Brussels and then to Paris. The two governors, together with their Embassy Kabul escorts, flew on to Munich after their stay in Berlin for a further two days of meetings and events before departing back to Afghanistan (Munich program to be reported septel). The governors had a full program in Berlin, which included a roundtable with more than a dozen German parliamentarians and separate meetings with the state secretaries at the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Foreign Office (MFA). The governors also participated in a press conference featuring leading journalists from print and electronic media, whose questions focused on security, corruption and the state of development in Kunar and Wardak. Coverage so far in print media has been skeptical, but overall positive. At the end of the day, the governors came to the Embassy for a wrap-up session with the Charge.

CONTROLLING THE BORDER WITH PAKISTAN

13. (C) In all the meetings, Kunar Governor Wahidi emphasized Kunar's geographic position as an eastern province with a 240-kilometer border with Pakistan. He complained that his province only had 600 of the 3,000 Afghan Border Police (ABP) needed to properly control this border and he appealed to his German interlocutors to provide greater assistance with the training and equipping of the ABP. MOI State Secretary August Hanning agreed that having a fully functioning and effective border police force was decisive in achieving success in Afghanistan, and in a surprise announcement, revealed that Germany was planning to establish a ABP training academy in Kabul, in an old Russian building right next to the existing German-run Afghan National Police (ANP) academy.

14. (C) On the margins of the meeting, MOI officials indicated that the academy would focus its work on training higher-level police officers in the ABP and that the plan was to accommodate up to 500 students at time. They were not sure how long the course of instruction would last, indicating that this was still under consideration. They invited us to return in January to get a fuller picture of their plans for the academy.

15. (C) During the meeting with parliamentarians, Elke Hoff of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), who is a regular visitor to Afghanistan, said that while Pakistan was ready to work with Afghanistan in reinforcing and controlling their common border, Afghanistan's reluctance to accept the Durand Line seemed to be hindering cooperation. Wahidi rejected the need for Afghanistan to formally recognize the Durand Line (something he claimed that Afghanistan was simply not in a position to deal with at the current time) in order to enable effective control of the border with Pakistan. He argued that since many tribes straddle both sides of the border, border control could not, in any event, consist of erecting barriers and checkpoints that limited the legitimate travel of tribal members back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Instead, he called for an increased and permanent presence of ABP on the border to deter, prevent and respond to the entry of insurgents from Pakistan.

EQUIPPING THE POLICE

16. (C) Wardak Governor Fedai also focused on the police in his remarks, stressing that the challenges went far beyond training. He noted that the Afghan National Police (ANP) lacked the necessary communication equipment to talk to each other, relying solely on personal cell phones, which frequently did not work at night. He said the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) called for the

construction of nine police stations in Wardak, but these remained unfunded. He complained that the police throughout Afghanistan lack uniforms, vehicles, fuel, accommodations, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) equipment and the tools necessary to do forensic investigations. He agreed with German parliamentarians who thought that police salaries had to be increased significantly to discourage corruption. But while he argued for a salary of \$300 to 500 per month, Wahidi was more cautious, noting that police salaries were already on par with that of the Afghan National Army (ANA).

DISPUTING CLAIMS REGARDING SECURITY SITUATION

¶7. (C) Both governors disputed recent studies and reports that have concluded that more than 70 percent of the country is controlled by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. They claimed that all of the districts in their respective provinces were in the hands of the government, although Wahidi acknowledged that parts of the mountainous border region of Kunar were not always under full control due to the lack of sufficient border police. He also made the point that the frequency of attacks alone do not indicate that the Taliban is strong -- in fact, suicide bombings are clearly a tactic of the weak.

¶8. (C) The governors also criticized the media for giving the perception that the security situation in Wardak and other RC-East provinces continued to worsen over the past year. Fedai argued that while it was true that security had deteriorated in Wardak in 2006 and 2007, things had turned around in 2008. He noted that while four of Wardak's nine districts had temporarily fallen under Taliban control in 2007, this had not happened at all in 2008. There were no permanent bases for insurgents in Wardak. He also criticized the media for failing to distinguish between insurgent and criminal activities, claiming that some 70 percent of the security incidents in Wardak were criminally motivated and not ideological attacks against the government.

WHY MORE TROOPS ARE NEEDED

¶9. (SBU) At the press conference, the governors were asked why they were asking for the deployment of additional foreign troops if, in fact, the Taliban were getting weaker and the security situation was improving. The governors pointed out that the additional foreign troops were necessary to fill continuing security gaps until sufficient numbers of the ANA, ANP, ABP and other Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were trained and equipped to do the job themselves. In response to a question about President-Elect Obama deciding to send additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan, Wahidi responded: He didn't decide to send them -- we asked for them! Wahidi noted that these troops would help prepare the ground to enable further advances on development and governance.

¶10. (C) In the wrap-up session with the Charge, Afghan Ambassador to Germany Zulfacar reported that new Afghan Interior Minister Atmar had made the same point to his German counterpart the previous week during an introductory visit to Berlin. Atmar had emphasized that there are currently not enough security forces to hold territory after it has been cleared, thereby allowing the Taliban to come back in and negate the beneficial effect of the military operations.

DISCREPANCIES IN DEVELOPMENT AID

¶11. (C) The governors highlighted the wide discrepancy in the distribution of development aid by PRT lead nations, as exemplified in their own two provinces. Wahidi noted that the U.S. had spent some \$82 million for a wide variety of projects in Kunar in the past year. Fedai said that the Turkish PRT in Wardak, by comparison, had only spent a total of \$15 million on projects in the province over the past three years, out of a total of \$100 million for the whole country. He said that other international actors like the EU were needed to provide supplementary resources in provinces where the PRT was led by a relatively poorer

country, like Turkey. MFA State Secretary Reinhard Silberberg said more should be done to get rich Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which are natural partners for Afghanistan, more involved in supporting the development effort. He noted that while Germany had pledged some \$420 million over the next three years at the Paris Conference this past summer, Saudi Arabia had committed just \$20 million.

EMPHASIS ON DISTRICT LEVEL

¶12. (C) Both governors emphasized the need for the international community to focus its efforts at the district level in Afghanistan, noting that most Afghans do not live in Kabul or a provincial capital, but rather in small rural villages across the country. They praised CSTC-A's Focused District Development (FDD) police training and mentoring as an example of a program that correctly takes account of this reality. Both MFA State Secretary Silberberg and MOI State Secretary Hanning confirmed that they found the case for the FDD program to be compelling, which was why Germany planned to participate in FDD on a bilateral basis in selected northern districts beginning in January.

¶13. (C) Silberberg also conceded that the EU Police Mission (EUPOL) -- which up until now has focused its work on the Afghan Ministry of Interior in Kabul and on giving strategic advice on how to set up the ANP and other Afghan police forces -- should be reoriented to focus more attention on police training. He indicated that Germany was pressing EUPOL in this direction. Green Party Defense Spokesman Winfried Nachtwei told us after the parliamentary meeting with the governors that his judgment about the irrelevance of EUPOL had been confirmed by the fact that neither Wahidi nor Fedai knew anything about it and talked only about the success of FDD.

TAKING THE GOVERNORS UP ON THEIR INVITATION?

¶14. (SBU) The governors invited journalists during the press conference to come to Kunar and Wardak to see for themselves that the comprehensive approach is working. This presents obvious logistical challenges, but if Embassy Kabul were willing, and funding for a visit by a group of ten to twelve German journalists could be arranged, we would advocate taking them up on the offer. While bringing Afghan officials to Brussels on a USNATO tour is certainly beneficial, we have found there is no replacement for sending German journalists to Afghanistan. It is relatively easy for journalists to visit Mazar and Kunduz through trips sponsored by the German military, but we have seen the most effective coverage in German media when reporters visit multiple provinces and PRTs outside the north.

SIDE BENEFIT: MENTORING OUR AFGHAN COLLEAGUES

¶15. (C) This is the third time within the past year that we have had Afghan governors stop in Berlin as part of a USNATO/Embassy Kabul-sponsored tour to Brussels. In addition to giving us an excellent opportunity to advance our Afghanistan agenda, both in private meetings with high-ranking German officials and through public diplomacy, these visits have also facilitated growing cooperation between Mission Germany and the Afghan Embassy here in Berlin. With each succeeding visit, the Afghans take on more and more responsibility for planning the program and scheduling the appointments. We have successfully used these visits to mentor our Afghan counterparts on organizing VIP visits and making contacts in the German government and Bundestag.
Koenig